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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/820,789	04/09/2004	Lynda Livingston	A8723	8714

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EXAMINER

HUYNH, KHOA D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3751

DATE MAILED: 07/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/820,789

Applicant(s)

LIVINGSTON ET AL.

Examiner

Khoa D. Huynh

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 April 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 7, 11-13, 15-20, 22-24, 26-34 and 36-39 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4, 7, 11-13, 15-20, 22-24, 26-34 and 36-39 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

1. The drawings were received on 04/28/06. These drawings are not accepted since they contain new matter.

Specification

2. The amendment filed 04/28/06 is objected to under 35 U.S.C. 132(a) because it introduces new matter into the disclosure. 35 U.S.C. 132(a) states that no amendment shall introduce new matter into the disclosure of the invention. The added material which is not supported by the original disclosure is as follows: the amended Figure 8 shows different layers with different configurations having zigzag configurations. Such zigzag configurations constitute new matter since they have not been disclosed in the original specification.

Applicant is required to cancel the new matter in the reply to this Office Action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1-4, 7, 11-13, 15-20, 22-24, 26-34 and 36-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pucci et al. (5974600) in view of Lawrence (5735529).

Regarding claim 1, the Pucci et al. reference discloses a spa cover system. The system includes a spa cover (12) and a flat, resilient gasket (74) provided at the bottom (38) of the spa cover. As schematically shown in Figure 8, the gasket is a solid material without a hollow space. The Pucci et al. reference DIFFERS in that the gasket does not specifically include a thicker portion and a thinner portion as claimed. Attention, however, is directed to the Lawrence reference which discloses a flat, resilient gasket for sealing the gap between surfaces (Fig. 3). The gasket includes a cross-section having a thicker portion (about 38) at an inner edge and a thinner portion (at 36) at an outer edge of the gasket. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Pucci et al. reference by employing a flat, resilient gasket having a thicker portion and a thinner portion in view of the teaching of Lawrence. Such modification would be considered a mere choice of a functionally equivalent gasket for another in the art that would work equally well on the Pucci et al. device.

Regarding claim 2, the gasket is made of elastomer which resembles rubber.

Regarding claim 3, even though the Pucci et al. reference does not specifically disclose that the gasket is foam rubber as claimed, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Pucci et al. reference by employing a gasket made of foam rubber. Such modification would be considered a mere choice of a preferred

material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use since the use of a foam rubber gasket to minimize heat loss for a spa cover system is known in the spa cover system art (see cited US 4234973 as evidence).

Regarding claim 4, the gasket (74) is adhesively bonded (via element 76) to the bottom of the spa cover.

Regarding claim 7, the spa tub includes a rim portion (20) at a top of the spa tub, wherein the gasket is inherently deformed between the spa tub and rim portion to a sealed contact.

Regarding claim 11, the cover (as shown in Figure 5) further includes a first portion, a second portion and a hinge (58) provided at a top of the spa cover connecting the first and second portions.

Regarding claims 12 and 13, as schematically shown in Fig. 5, an edge (constitute by elements 48 & 54) of the first portion and an edge (constitute by elements 50 & 54) of the second portion are adjacent to one another, a space is provided between the edges and a part of the gasket is provided on the edges. Also, schematically shown in Figure 6, a flap (66) extends from the top of the spa cover into the space between the edges, wherein a resilient flap gasket (68) is provided at an end of the flap.

Regarding claim 15, the spa cover system further includes a spa tub (10,16) having rim portion (20). In the closing configuration (Fig. 3A), the gasket is obviously in a deformed manner for being disposed between the cover and the

top rim of the tub. The outer edge of the gasket is at a position closer to an outside wall (about 18) of the tub than the inner edge.

Regarding claims 16 and 17, the cover includes a core insulating material (42) and a cover material (constituted by elements 36 & 38 in Fig. 6) that surrounds the entire core insulating material. The Pucci et al. reference also discloses that the cover material includes a plurality of diverse waterproof layers (col. 5, lines 5-9), wherein at least one of the layers is a different material than the other layer (the layer constituted by element 38 is of a different material than the waterproof silicone applied between elements 48 and 42).

Regarding claim 18, the cover material is a multi-layer PVDC resin.

Regarding claims 19 and 20, even though the modified Pucci et al. reference does not specifically disclose that one of the plurality of diverse waterproof layers is provided at a different orientation as claimed, it, however, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the modified Pucci et al. reference by employing different orientations for the plurality of diverse waterproof layers. Such modification would be considered a mere choice of a preferred arrangement for the plurality of diverse waterproof layers on the basis of its suitability for the intended use, especially since applicant, in the remarks section, page 11-12, readily admits that one skill in the art could easily make different layers having different orientations without undue experimentation.

Regarding claims 22-24, the cover is a multiple-piece (two-piece) cover with a hinge (58).

Claims 26-30 recites limitations that are similar to the limitations of claims 16-20 which have been rejected as discussed supra.

Regarding claim 31, the Pucci et al. reference discloses a spa cover system. The system includes a spa tub (10) having a tub rim (20), a spa cover (12) and a resilient gasket (74) interposed between the tub and the cover and provided at the bottom (38) of the spa cover. As schematically shown in Figure 8, the gasket is a solid material without a hollow space. The Pucci et al. reference DIFFERS in that the gasket does not specifically include a thicker portion and a thinner portion as claimed. Attention, however, is directed to the Lawrence reference which discloses a flat, resilient gasket for sealing the gap between surfaces (Fig. 3). The gasket includes a cross-section having a thicker portion (about 38) at an inner edge and a thinner portion (at 36) at an outer edge of the gasket. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Pucci et al. reference by employing a flat, resilient gasket having a thicker portion and a thinner portion in view of the teaching of Lawrence. Such modification would be considered a mere choice of a functionally equivalent gasket for another in the art that would work equally well on the Pucci et al. device.

Regarding claim 32, the gasket is made of elastomer which resembles rubber.

Regarding claim 33, even though the Pucci et al. reference does not specifically disclose that the gasket is foam rubber as claimed, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the Pucci et al. reference by employing a gasket made of foam rubber. Such modification would be considered a mere choice of a preferred material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use since the use of a foam rubber gasket to minimize heat loss for a spa cover system is known in the spa cover system art (see cited US 4234973 as evidence).

Regarding claim 34, the gasket (74) is adhesively bonded (via element 76) to the bottom of the spa cover.

Regarding claim 36, view as a whole, the cover is a one-piece cover.

Regarding claims 37-39, the cover is a multiple-piece (two-piece) cover with a hinge (58).

Response to Amendment

5. Applicant's amendment, filed on 04/28/06, to the pending claims is insufficient to distinguish the claimed invention from the cited prior art or overcome the rejections as discussed above.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed on 04/28/06 with respect to the pending claims have been fully considered. However, they are deemed not persuasive.

Applicant asserts that neither the Pucci et al. reference nor the Hansen reference teaches the gasket without a hollow space and wherein the cross-section of the gasket

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includes a thicker portion and a thinner portion as amended. See Remarks section, pages 12-15.

Nevertheless, such assertions are now moot in view of the new grounds of rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pucci et al. (5974600) in view of Lawrence (5735529) as discussed above.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.
8. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Khoa D. Huynh whose telephone number is (571) 272-4888. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:00-3:30).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Justine Yu can be reached on (571) 272-4835. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



Khoa D. Huynh
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3751

HK
07/07/2006